

**Assembly Joint Resolution**

**No. 34**

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**Introduced by Assembly Members Achadjian, Nazarian, and Wilk**  
(Principal coauthor: Senator De León)

March 16, 2016

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Assembly Joint Resolution No. 34—Relative to the Armenian Genocide.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AJR 34, as introduced, Achadjian. Armenian Genocide.

This measure would, among other things, designate the year of 2016 as “State of California Year of Commemoration of the Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923,” designate April 24, 2016, as “State of California Day of Commemoration of the 101st Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923,” and would call upon the President of the United States and the United States Congress to formally and consistently reaffirm the historical truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted genocide.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, Armenians have resided in Asia Minor and the  
2 Caucasus for approximately four millennia, and have a long and  
3 rich history in the region, including the establishment of many  
4 kingdoms, and despite Armenians’ historic presence, stewardship,  
5 and autonomy in the region, Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire  
6 and the Republic of Turkey subjected Armenians to severe and  
7 unjust persecution and brutality, including wholesale massacres  
8 beginning in the 1890s; and

1 WHEREAS, The Armenian nation was subjected to a systematic  
2 and premeditated genocide officially beginning on April 24, 1915,  
3 at the hands of the Young Turk Government of the Ottoman Empire  
4 from 1915–1919 and continued at the hands of the Kemalist  
5 Movement of Turkey from 1920–1923 whereby over 1.5 million  
6 Armenian men, women, and children were slaughtered or marched  
7 to their deaths in an effort to annihilate the Armenian nation in the  
8 first genocide of modern times, while thousands of surviving  
9 Armenian women and children were forcibly converted and  
10 Islamized, and hundreds of thousands more were subjected to  
11 ethnic cleansing during the period of the modern Republic of  
12 Turkey from 1924–1937; and

13 WHEREAS, During the genocides of the Christians living in  
14 the Ottoman Empire and surrounding regions, which occurred  
15 during the first one-half of the 20th century, 1.5 million men,  
16 women, and children of Armenian descent, and hundreds of  
17 thousands of Assyrians, Greeks, and other Christians, lost their  
18 lives at the hands of the Ottoman Turkish Empire and the Republic  
19 of Turkey, constituting one of the most atrocious violations of  
20 human rights in the history of the world; and

21 WHEREAS, These crimes against humanity also had the  
22 consequence of permanently removing all traces of the Armenians  
23 and other targeted people from their historic homelands of more  
24 than four millennia, and enriching the perpetrators with the lands  
25 and other property of the victims of these crimes, including the  
26 usurpation of several thousand churches; and

27 WHEREAS, In response to the genocide and at the behest of  
28 President Woodrow Wilson and the United States State  
29 Department, the Near East Relief organization was founded, and  
30 became the first congressionally sanctioned American philanthropic  
31 effort created exclusively to provide humanitarian assistance and  
32 rescue to the Armenian nation and other Christian minorities from  
33 annihilation, who went on to survive and thrive outside of their  
34 ancestral homeland all over the world and specifically in this state;  
35 and

36 WHEREAS, Near East Relief succeeded, with the active  
37 participation of the citizens from this state, in delivering \$117  
38 million in assistance, and saving more than one million refugees,  
39 including 132,000 orphans, between 1915 and 1930, by delivering

1 food, clothing, and materials for shelter, setting up refugee camps,  
2 clinics, hospitals, and orphanages; and

3 WHEREAS, The Armenian nation survived the genocide despite  
4 the attempt by the Ottoman Empire to exterminate it; and

5 WHEREAS, Adolf Hitler, in persuading his army commanders  
6 that the merciless persecution and killing of Jews, Poles, and other  
7 people would bring no retribution, declared, “Who, after all, speaks  
8 today of the annihilation of the Armenians?”; and

9 WHEREAS, On November 4, 1918, immediately after the  
10 collapse of the Young Turk regime and before the founding of the  
11 Republic of Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923, the  
12 Ottoman Parliament considered a motion on the crimes committed  
13 by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) stating: “A  
14 population of one million people guilty of nothing except belonging  
15 to the Armenian nation were massacred and exterminated,  
16 including even women and children.” The Minister of Interior at  
17 the time, Fethi Bey, responded by telling the Parliament: “It is the  
18 intention of the government to cure every single injustice done up  
19 until now, as far as the means allow, to make possible the return  
20 to their homes of those sent into exile, and to compensate for their  
21 material loss as far as possible”; and

22 WHEREAS, On August 1, 1926, in an interview published in  
23 the Los Angeles Examiner, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk admitted:  
24 “These left-overs from the former Young Turk Party, who should  
25 have been made to account for the lives of millions of our Christian  
26 subjects who were ruthlessly driven en masse, from their homes  
27 and massacred, have been restive under the Republican rule. They  
28 have hitherto lived on plunder, robbery and bribery and become  
29 inimical to any idea or suggestion to enlist in useful labor and earn  
30 their living by the honest sweat of their brow”; and

31 WHEREAS, The Parliamentary Investigative Committee  
32 proceeded to collect relevant documents describing the actions of  
33 those responsible for the Armenian mass killings and turned them  
34 over to the Turkish Military Tribunal. CUP’s leading figures were  
35 found guilty of massacring Armenians and hanged or given lengthy  
36 prison sentences. The Turkish Military Tribunal requested that  
37 Germany extradite to Turkey the masterminds of the massacres  
38 who had fled the country. After German refusal, they were tried  
39 in absentia and sentenced to death; and

1 WHEREAS, Unlike other people and governments that have  
2 admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor  
3 regimes, and despite the Turkish government's earlier admissions  
4 and the overwhelming proof of genocidal intent, the Republic of  
5 Turkey inexplicably and adamantly has denied the occurrence of  
6 the crimes against humanity committed by the Ottoman and Young  
7 Turk rulers for many years, and continues to do so a full century  
8 since the first crimes constituting genocide occurred; and

9 WHEREAS, Those denials compound the grief of the few  
10 remaining survivors and deprive the surviving Armenian nation  
11 of its individual and collective ancestral lands, property, cultural  
12 heritage, financial assets, and population growth; and

13 WHEREAS, The Republic of Turkey has escalated its  
14 international campaign of Armenian Genocide denial, maintained  
15 its blockade of Armenia, and increased its pressure on the small  
16 but growing movement in Turkey acknowledging the Armenian  
17 Genocide and seeking justice for this systematic campaign of  
18 destruction of millions of Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, and other  
19 Christians upon their biblical-era homelands; and

20 WHEREAS, Those citizens of Turkey, both Armenian and  
21 non-Armenian, who continue to speak the truth about the Armenian  
22 Genocide, such as human rights activist and journalist Hrant Dink,  
23 continue to be silenced by violent means; and

24 WHEREAS, There is continued concern about the welfare of  
25 Christians in the Republic of Turkey, their right to worship and  
26 practice freely, and the legal status and condition of thousands of  
27 ancient Armenian churches, monasteries, cemeteries, and other  
28 historical and cultural structures, sites, and antiquities in the  
29 Republic of Turkey; and

30 WHEREAS, The United States is on record as having officially  
31 recognized the Armenian Genocide in the United States  
32 government's May 28, 1951, written statement to the International  
33 Court of Justice regarding the Reservations to the Convention on  
34 the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, through  
35 President Ronald Reagan's April 22, 1981, Proclamation No. 4838,  
36 and by congressional legislation including House Joint Resolution  
37 148 adopted on April 9, 1975, and House Joint Resolution 247  
38 adopted on September 12, 1984; and

39 WHEREAS, Prior to the Convention on the Prevention and  
40 Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United States had a

1 record of seeking just and constructive means to address the  
2 consequences of the Ottoman Empire’s intentional destruction of  
3 the Armenian people, including through United States Senate  
4 Concurrent Resolution 12 adopted on February 9, 1916, United  
5 States Senate Resolution 359 adopted on May 11, 1920, and  
6 President Woodrow Wilson’s November 22, 1920, decision  
7 entitled, “The Frontier between Armenia and Turkey,” which was  
8 issued as a binding arbitral award, yet has not been enforced to  
9 this date despite its legally binding status; and

10 WHEREAS, President Barack Obama entered office “calling  
11 for Turkey’s acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide” and on  
12 April 24, 2013, and similarly on April 24, 2014, he further stated,  
13 “A full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts is in all of  
14 our interests. Peoples and nations grow stronger, and build a more  
15 just and tolerant future, by acknowledging and reckoning with  
16 painful elements of the past”; and

17 WHEREAS, California is home to the largest  
18 Armenian-American population in the United States, and  
19 Armenians living in California have enriched our state through  
20 their leadership and contribution in business, agriculture, academia,  
21 government, and the arts, many of whom have family members  
22 who experienced firsthand the horror and evil of the Armenian  
23 Genocide and its ongoing denial; and

24 WHEREAS, Every person should be made aware and educated  
25 about the Armenian Genocide and other crimes against humanity;  
26 and

27 WHEREAS, The State of California has been at the forefront  
28 of encouraging and promoting a curriculum relating to human  
29 rights and genocide in order to empower future generations to  
30 prevent the recurrence of genocide; and

31 WHEREAS, April 24, 1915, is globally observed and recognized  
32 as the commencement of the Armenian Genocide; and

33 WHEREAS, Armenians in the State of California and throughout  
34 the world, have not been provided with justice for the crimes  
35 perpetrated against the Armenian nation despite the fact that over  
36 a century has passed since the crimes were first committed; and

37 WHEREAS, The Armenian people in the State of California  
38 and throughout the world, remain resolved and their spirit continues  
39 to thrive more than a century after their near annihilation; now,  
40 therefore, be it

1     *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*  
2     *California, jointly,* That the Legislature hereby designates the year  
3     of 2016 as “State of California Year of Commemoration of the  
4     Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923” and in  
5     doing so, intends, through the enactment of legislation, that the  
6     Armenian Genocide is properly commemorated and taught to its  
7     citizens and visitors through statewide educational and cultural  
8     events; and be it further

9     *Resolved,* That the Legislature hereby designates April 24, 2016,  
10    as “State of California Day of Commemoration of the 101st  
11    Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”; and be it  
12    further

13    *Resolved,* That the Legislature commends its conscientious  
14    educators who teach about human rights and genocide, and intends  
15    for them, through the enactment of legislation, to continue to  
16    enhance their efforts to educate students at all levels about the  
17    experience of the Armenians and other crimes against humanity;  
18    and be it further

19    *Resolved,* That the Legislature hereby commends the  
20    extraordinary service which was delivered by Near East Relief to  
21    the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and the Assyrian  
22    Genocide, including thousands of direct beneficiaries of American  
23    philanthropy who are the parents, grandparents, and  
24    great-grandparents of many Californian Armenians and Assyrians,  
25    and pledges its intent, through the enactment of legislation, to  
26    working with community groups, nonprofit organizations, citizens,  
27    state personnel, and the community at large to host statewide  
28    educational and cultural events; and be it further

29    *Resolved,* That the Legislature deplores the persistent, ongoing  
30    efforts by any person, in this country or abroad, to deny the  
31    historical fact of the Armenian Genocide; and be it further

32    *Resolved,* That the Legislature respectfully calls upon the  
33    President of the United States and the United States Congress to  
34    formally and consistently reaffirm the historical truth that the  
35    atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted  
36    genocide; and be it further

37    *Resolved,* That the Legislature calls on the President of the  
38    United States to work toward equitable, constructive, stable, and  
39    durable Armenian-Turkish relations; and be it further

1     *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies  
2 of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United  
3 States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the  
4 Majority Leader of the Senate, to each Senator and Representative  
5 from California in the Congress of the United States, to the  
6 Governor of California, to every member of the California State  
7 Legislature, and to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

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